

## **Annual Report of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Place 2021 - 2022**

### **Development Management**

Planning application determination rates have been relatively low with service priority being given to staff recruitment and the clearance of the application backlog. Lower grade posts were successfully filled, but recruiting senior officers remains challenging (a national problem in the planning sector). Principal Planning Officer posts therefore remain vacant. However, application determination times are improving through 2022, and the new Pre-Planning Application Advice Service will launch in May. The Team also concluded intensive work on the Eden North planning application - its approval achieving a critical milestone and boosting the project's deliverability and funding business case.

Building Control service, provided by Capita, has developed new partnerships with public and private developers/agents. The Team had a busy year responding to dangerous buildings/sites and undertaking enforcement activity. Recruitment to Building Control posts is pending job evaluation.

### **Planning and Housing Strategy**

The Climate Emergency Local Plan Review (CELPR) has been undertaken to a tight timescale. The CELPR will ensure climate change matters, necessary mitigation, and adaption measures are considered as part of the council's response to declaring a [Climate Emergency](#) and will be subject to formal public examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) created to support the CELPR include Sustainable Transport; Incorporating Green and Blue Infrastructure; Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Generation; Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage; Flood Risk – Sequential and Exception Test; and Provision for Electric Vehicles and Associated Charging Infrastructure. Informal consultation will take place in Spring 2022. Other SPDs in preparation include: Viability Protocol; and Developer Contributions in South Lancaster. SPDs adopted include: Lancaster Canal Quarter Strategic Regeneration framework (November 2021); and Meeting Housing Needs (February 2022).

Evidence and preparation gathering continues for Lancaster South Area Action Plan (LSAAP). The LSAAP will allocate development and reserve land (including areas of separation and for flood mitigation). It will also set out delivery responsibilities for the public and private interests and programme the necessary strategic enabling infrastructure. Parishes and communities supported to advance Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) for adoption in 2022 include: Caton with Littledale; Slyne with Hest; Carnforth; and Aldcliffe with Stodday. Both Wray and Wennington already benefit from adopted NPs. The service continues to prepare Planning Advisory Notes (PANs) on a range of topics, all detailed in the revised and updated [Local Development Scheme](#)

### **Sustainable Transport**

The service continues to influence transport policy at national and regional levels. Officers have been lobbying to ensure Lancaster is a 'stopping station' for HS2 services. The national HS2 Assumptions Report (2020) indicated Lancaster would not be served by direct HS2 trains. However, the updated HS2 Strategic Outline Business Case (January 2022) indicates all options now include Lancaster as a stopping station. Lobbying will continue through 2022/23 when train service patterns are clearer. Alongside local partners, such as Lancaster Civic Vision, officers lobbied for retention of late evening train services between Lancaster and Manchester. Details of the new level of service are to be issued shortly. A bid for Carnforth to become the home of Great British Railways was submitted in March 2022, involving officers from a range of council services.

The service continues to work closely with the county council on major highway proposals, including the Lancaster City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy. Public consultation on Lancaster gyratory options, including changes to bus routing, will follow later in the year. The strategic South Lancaster Growth Catalyst infrastructure project will positively transform the city's urban form, public realm, and air quality. Officers will ensure proposals are informed by local knowledge and are looking at the scope for a sustainable travel stakeholder group. Officers are working with Lancaster District Bus Users Group to improve cleanliness and the user experience at Lancaster Bus Station.

The car parking tariff review (approved April 2022) was amended following stakeholder feedback. Tariffs now better support the night-time economy, cultural sector, and will introduce new permits to assist voluntary groups. Post-pandemic reopening of Dalton Square to traffic and parking spurred the city council, alongside county council, and stakeholders such as Lancaster BID, to explore options for creating a more attractive public space, including permanent pedestrianisation.

### **Lancaster Canal Quarter Masterplan**

Consultants PRP were appointed in December 2021 to deliver the masterplan, following the adoption of the [Canal Quarter Strategic Regeneration Framework](#) (CQSRF) as an SPD in November 2021. After decades of failed private sector-led approaches, the city council is taking a more pro-active role in enabling a fresh approach to future development. Early work has focussed on:

- Integration with the Lancaster City Centre Movement and Public Realm Strategy proposals.
- Working to join up major third-party landowner/developer aspirations and ideas.
- Reviewing preferred land uses with respect to viability, market demand, and deliverability.
- Assessment of priorities and approach to retention and refurbishment of historic buildings.
- Route to progression of infrastructure, such as area heating network.

Potential identified “early wins” could deliver new housing and commercial development, but challenges remain in securing viable propositions. However, the area has potential to deliver a range of housing types, create a sustainable community, breathe new life into the city centre, and help meet the council's Homes Strategy ambitions. Further stakeholder and community consultation is planned for the summer. The final masterplan should be approved in September 2022.

### **Lancaster High Streets Heritage Action Zone**

The [Heritage Action Zone](#) (HAZ) is 2 years into a 4-year programme with building grant take-up gaining momentum. Extensive improvements to the Grand Theatre façade are underway following earlier repair phases. Public realm ambitions remain focused on Lower Church Street and upper North Road and will progress alongside the proposed changes to the gyratory system. Footpath improvements to the north side Damside Street are scheduled for delivery in summer 2022.

Following previous consultation and review of part one of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP), part two has been finalised for review. The full CMP identifies the HAZ's heritage significance, informing policy and practice through and beyond the HAZ programme. Across Spring/Summer, and following public consultation, 12 green heritage plaques will be placed on important historic buildings. As pandemic restrictions eased the HAZ cultural programme, [Mill Race: Flow of Change](#), delivered a number of community engagement events, helping bring the area's story to life, giving the public new reasons to spend time in the area. The programme made well received links to Light Up Lancaster and two further events are planned

for the end of April. Churches Conservation Trust ambitions to bring St John's Church back into beneficial use were boosted by the advancement of the business case for the building's re-use and an invitation from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to submit a major capital funding bid this year.

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**Portfolio Holder for Planning and Place**